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12  
13 *Attorneys for Plaintiff,*  
14 Backgrid USA, Inc.

15 **UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**  
16 **CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

17 BACKGRID USA, INC., a California  
18 corporation,

19 Plaintiff,

20 v.

21 TWITTER, INC., a Delaware  
22 corporation and DOES 1-10, inclusive,

23 Defendants.

24 Case No.: CV 22-9462-DMG (ADSx)

25 **FIRST AMENDED COMPLAINT**  
26 **FOR:**  
27 **(1) COPYRIGHT INFRINGEMENT**  
28 **(17 U.S.C. § 501)**  
**(2) DECLARATORY JUDGMENT RE**  
**NO DMCA SAFE HARBOR**

29 **DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL**

1 Plaintiff, Backgrid USA, Inc., complains against Defendant Twitter, Inc. a  
2 corporation, and Does 1-10 (collectively, “Defendants”) as follows:

3 **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

4 1. This is a civil action for direct, contributory, and vicarious copyright  
5 infringement under the Copyright Act, 17 U.S.C. §§ 101 *et seq.* This Court has  
6 subject matter jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1331, 28 U.S.C. § 1332, 28 U.S.C. §  
7 2201, 17 U.S.C. § 501(a), and 28 U.S.C. § 1338(a) and (b).

8 2. Venue is proper in this District under 28 U.S.C. §§ 1391(b) and (c) and  
9 28 U.S.C. § 1400(a) in that the claim arises in this Judicial District, the defendants  
10 may be found and transact business in this Judicial District, and the injury suffered by  
11 Backgrid took place, and is taking place, in this Judicial District. Defendant has  
12 offices in Santa Monica, California. Defendants are subject to the general and specific  
13 personal jurisdiction of this Court because of their contacts with the State of  
14 California.

15 **PARTIES**

16 3. Plaintiff Backgrid is incorporated in and existing under the laws of the  
17 State of California, with its principal place of business located in Redondo Beach,  
18 California.

19 4. On information and belief, Defendant Twitter, Inc. is incorporated in and  
20 existing under the laws of Delaware, with its principal place of business in San  
21 Francisco, California.

22 5. The true names or capacities, whether individual, corporate or otherwise,  
23 of the defendants named herein as Does 1 through 10, inclusive, are unknown to  
24 Backgrid, who therefore sues said defendants by such fictitious names. Backgrid will  
25 ask leave of Court to amend this Complaint to insert the true names and capacities of  
26 said defendants when the same have been ascertained.

## **FACTS COMMON TO ALL COUNTS**

## *Backgrid and the Photographs that Frame this Dispute*

6. Backgrid is the world's premier celebrity-related photograph agency and provides highly sought-after images of celebrities around the world to top news and lifestyle outlets. Its photographs increase the sales of its customers' magazines and newspapers and increase their website traffic and website viewer engagement.

Backgrid's photographs are regularly licensed by *People* magazine, the *Huffington Post*, the *Daily Mail*, *TMZ*, *US Weekly*, *Radar Online*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Entertainment Tonight*, *Vogue*, *Elle* magazine, and many other publications.

7. Backgrid owns all rights to the Celebrity Photographs, each of which was timely registered with the United States Copyright Office. A list of the copyright registrations for the Celebrity Photographs known to have been infringed is attached as Exhibit A. Due to Defendant's continuing infringements and refusal to adopt and reasonably implement a Digital Millennium Copyright Act ("DMCA") repeat infringer policy, the number of timely registered infringements on its Twitter platform and the damages for which Defendant is responsible is continually increasing. Backgrid seeks to recover for all such infringements whether they are specifically alleged herein or not.

8. For valuable consideration, Backgrid and/or AKM-GSI Media, Inc. (“AKM-GSI”), the predecessor in interest to certain Celebrity Photographs, have licensed, and Backgrid continues to license, the rights to reproduce, distribute, and publicly display the Celebrity Photographs and make derivative versions thereof, to hundreds of magazines, newspapers, television stations, and other media outlets throughout the world.

## *Twitter's Platform*

9. Defendant's business is a simple, but spectacularly profitable, platform that touts itself as a "global platform for public self-expression and conversation in

1 real time" that "help[s] people discover what's happening through text, images, on  
2 demand and live video" among other types of content. According to SimilarWeb.com,  
3 Twitter is one of the top ranked websites globally, ranking it as number five in the  
4 world and averages 7.1 billion visits per month.

5 10. Twitter monetizes its platform by enabling advertisers to promote their  
6 brands, products, and services through the Twitter platform that then permits targeting  
7 specific audience members by the accounts they follow and the actions they have  
8 taken on the Twitter platform. Twitter also monetizes the data it collects from its  
9 users and sells it to their clients for commercial use. Each upload, click, and view is  
10 data that can be and is monetized, which means Twitter monetizes each photo  
11 uploaded on the platform through the data it collects. Using the information it  
12 collects, Twitter targets advertisements to specific user audiences. It does so by  
13 displaying advertisements calculated to interest a given audience. It also displays  
14 other tweets in a feed tailored to a particulate user. On information and belief, the  
15 Celebrity Photographs were displayed in tweet-feeds, along with advertisements that  
16 targeted particular groups of Twitter users. On information and belief, Twitter charges  
17 advertisers more based on the amount of the interaction the advertisement-tweet  
18 generates. As such, it is important to Twitter to have attractive and compelling tweets  
19 placed around the advertisement tweet to gain more traffic and more advertisement  
20 interaction. To keep its users engaged while promoting the advertisements on which  
21 its revenue depends, Twitter also sends emails to its users with links to tweets that  
22 they might not otherwise see. Twitter thus provides links to tweets from accounts that  
23 are not "followed" by the targeted user. By doing so, Twitter increases the number of  
24 views those advertisements receive, thereby increasing its own advertising revenue.

25 11. Once a Twitter user uploads a photo, Twitter selects, orders, and/or  
26 arranges content to display to other Twitter users, including content from Twitter  
27 accounts that are not among those "followed" by the viewing user.

1           12. A significant factor enabling Defendant to drive massive amounts of  
 2 traffic to the Twitter platform is the presence of sought-after and searched-for  
 3 celebrity images uploaded onto the users' accounts without the consent of the third-  
 4 party copyright owners. Defendant is aware of the massive scale of copyright  
 5 infringement it facilitates and encourages, and of the revenue and profits such  
 6 infringement generates for it.

7           **Twitter Does Not Terminate Repeat Infringers as Required for Safe Harbor**  
 8           **Protection Under 17 U.S.C. § 512(i)**

9           13. Twitter claims to have DMCA compliant take-down policies set forth in  
 10 its websites' Terms of Service. Based thereon, it claims that the DMCA's safe harbor  
 11 protection for ISPs with DMCA compliant take-down policies shields it from liability  
 12 for the massive number of infringements it contributes to and engages in daily. But  
 13 such lip service compliance with the DMCA is merely a fig leaf to hide its systematic  
 14 abuse of the rights of photograph copyright holders and their enormous profits derived  
 15 from such infringement.

16           14. A threshold requirement for DMCA safe harbor protection is that the ISP  
 17 must have “adopted *and reasonably implemented* ... a policy that provides for the  
 18 termination in appropriate circumstances of subscribers and account holders ... who  
 19 are repeat infringers.” 17 U.S.C. § 512(i)(1)(A) (emphasis added).

20           15. Although Twitter's “Copyright Policy” provides that copyright owners  
 21 may send a DMCA takedown notice and that “If multiple copyright complaints are  
 22 received about an account, or other evidence suggests a pattern of repeat infringement,  
 23 Twitter may suspend that account in accordance with our Repeat Infringer Policy.”  
 24 Unfortunately, its purported policy is honored in the breach.

25           16. Industry standard practices have resulted in the widespread adoption and  
 26 implementation by legitimate ISPs of a “three-strikes” policy with respect to repeat  
 27 infringers. The industry standard requires that to qualify for the DMCA safe harbor  
 28

1 protection, ISPs must terminate the accounts of users that have been the subject of  
2 three infringement complaints. Defendant, however, regularly fails and refuses to  
3 comport with the industry standard.

4       17. Defendant's failure to reasonably implement a policy resulting in the  
5 expeditious removal of infringing photographs owned by Backgrid and others and/or  
6 their failure and refusal to terminate subscribers shown to be repeat infringers divests  
7 them of DMCA safe harbor protection and renders them not just directly but  
8 contributory and vicariously liable for the infringement of Backgrid's Celebrity  
9 Photographs as described herein.

10      18. Despite sending more than 6,700 DMCA takedown notices, not a single  
11 work was taken down and not a single repeat infringer was suspended. Each notice  
12 complied with 17 U.S.C. 512(c)(3), giving Twitter knowledge of specific infringing  
13 material, including by providing a link to where the infringement was stored and  
14 where it was displayed. Despite having such knowledge, however, Twitter failed to  
15 take simple measures to prevent further damage, such as disabling the infringement  
16 and deleting it from its servers, as well as suspending the infringing accounts which  
17 repeatedly infringed the copyrights belonging to Backgrid.

18      19. Twitter treats Backgrid's DMCA notices differently than notices from  
19 other parties, demonstrating that it has not implemented a reasonable DMCA policy.  
20 Moreover, it attempts to feign ignorance of what is in Backgrid's DMCA notices, thus  
21 acting with willful blindness towards the infringement of Backgrid's works. Other  
22 parties send DMCA notices similar to those sent by Backgrid, to which Twitter  
23 responds by taking the work down. However, with Backgrid's notices, Twitter  
24 requires extrajudicial information beyond that required by the DMCA. On information  
25 and belief, Twitter treats Backgrid differently than smaller content providers because  
26 Backgrid is the source of a substantial amount of valuable, celebrity content.

1       20. Backgrid attempted to resolve this dispute prior to filing this complaint,  
2 but Twitter did not respond.

3       **Examples of Twitter's Failure to Terminate Infringing Accounts Notwithstanding**

4       **Backgrid's Issuance of Numerous Take-down Notifications**

5       21. Backgrid sent Twitter ***at least 73 DMCA take-down notifications***  
6 encompassing ***at least 49 timely registered infringing photographs*** on the 'BSO'  
7 account.

8       22. Specifically, it sent the notices described herein on or around dates  
9 alleged therein:

- 10       • September 28, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
11       displayed at <https://twitter.com/bs0/status/999723833413308416>.
- 12       • September 28, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
13       displayed at <https://twitter.com/bs0/status/1041018833249730561>.
- 14       • September 29, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
15       displayed at <https://twitter.com/bs0/status/1295225863349374976>.
- 16       • September 30, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
17       displayed at <https://twitter.com/bs0/status/1431844066434686982>.
- 18       • October 1, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at  
19       <https://twitter.com/bs0/status/1148821772021706752>.
- 20       • October 2, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at  
21       <https://twitter.com/bs0/status/1432010166602506241>.
- 22       • October 3, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at  
23       <https://twitter.com/bs0/status/1148952773360308226>.
- 24       • October 4, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at  
25       <https://twitter.com/bs0/status/1149012113907683335>.
- 26       • October 5, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at  
27       <https://twitter.com/bs0/status/1151253995769516032>.

- 1       • October 6, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at  
2                    <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1151314397450686464>.
- 3       • October 7, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at  
4                    <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1151357279385587712>.
- 5       • October 8, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at  
6                    <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1177817294208212992>.
- 7       • October 10, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
8                    at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1185425722288103429>.
- 9       • October 11, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
10                   at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1185591823588352000>.
- 11       • October 12, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
12                   at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1187601737210830848>.
- 13       • October 13, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
14                   at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1187603582008381440>.
- 15       • October 14, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
16                   at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1391987038027661312>.
- 17       • October 15, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
18                   at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1187754580890783744>.
- 19       • October 16, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
20                   at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1187767834593693697>.
- 21       • October 17, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
22                   at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1190135157690380288>.
- 23       • October 18, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
24                   at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1190286158447730688>.
- 25       • October 19, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
26                   at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1211891609807282176>.

- 1       • October 20, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
2            at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1212027510822703113>.
- 3       • October 21, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
4            at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/122508430604703346>.
- 5       • October 22, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
6            at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1277831087113359360>.
- 7       • October 23, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
8            at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1277891487578062848>.
- 9       • October 24, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
10           at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1283997752997945345>.
- 11       • October 25, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
12           at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1284133652071419906>.
- 13       • October 26, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
14           at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1295376867541880832>.
- 15       • October 27, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
16           at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1295949135443570689>.
- 17       • October 28, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
18           at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1296172670934044678>.
- 19       • October 29, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
20           at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1314430538124537857>.
- 21       • October 30, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
22           at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1314581539288748032>.
- 23       • October 31, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
24           at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1316813710766342144>.
- 25       • November 1, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
26           displayed at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1323874836037410816>.

- 1       • November 2, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
2                displayed at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1323935241296334848>.
- 3       • November 3, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
4                displayed at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1336195907394670592>.
- 5       • November 4, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
6                displayed at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1336435400081108993>.
- 7       • November 5, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
8                displayed at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1336495805553840128>.
- 9       • November 6, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
10                displayed at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1352139360758587392>.
- 11       • November 7, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
12                displayed at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1352290361734008835>.
- 13       • November 8, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
14                displayed at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1355397326089711618>.
- 15       • November 9, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
16                displayed at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1355563454766198784>.
- 17       • November 10, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
18                displayed at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1359950244000247811>.
- 19       • November 11, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
20                displayed at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1360010649913425925>.
- 21       • November 12, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
22                displayed at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1361454500725329921>.
- 23       • November 13, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
24                displayed at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1361514903660552194>.
- 25       • November 14, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
26                displayed at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1378212598903111680>.

- November 15, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1378378900082987011>.
- November 16, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1380761472112979970>.
- November 17, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1380927572494725128>.
- November 18, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1392138036859838467>.
- November 19, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1395419105281421314>.
- November 20, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1395479508757716999>.
- November 21, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1404666758347333634>.
- November 22, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1404675563462201349>.
- November 23, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1404811465001947139>.
- November 24, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1404817760094404616>.
- November 25, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1410832827281780737>.
- November 26, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1410983831256055814>.
- April 18, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1482122357967921152>.

- 1           • April 19, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at  
2            <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1473715965326200847>.
- 3           • April 20, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at  
4            <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1473776368282341376>.
- 5           • April 21, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at  
6            <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1482182759976214535>.
- 7           • April 22, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at  
8            <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1482405267585310722>.
- 9           • April 23, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at  
10           <https://twitter.com/bso/status/148246566965655522>.
- 11           • April 24, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at  
12           <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1486031048832126979>.
- 13           • April 25, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at  
14           <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1486091452958527493>.
- 15           • April 26, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at  
16           <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1487081489514868740>.
- 17           • June 20, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at  
18           <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1522045895088525312>.
- 19           • November 14, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
20            displayed at <https://twitter.com/bso/status/1536507682248609794>.

21 Notwithstanding the receipt of the take-down notices described herein, the ‘BSO’  
22 account remains live and active. At the time this lawsuit was filed each infringement  
23 was live.

24        23. Backgrid sent Twitter ***at least 101 DMCA take-down notifications***  
25 encompassing ***at least 42 timely registered photographs*** on the ‘foochia’ account.

26        24. Specifically, it sent the notices described herein on or around dates  
27 alleged therein:

- 1       • September 4, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
2            at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1168402506415845376>.
- 3       • September 5, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
4            displayed at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1189797107726798848>.
- 5       • September 6, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
6            displayed at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1219887570714316800>.
- 7       • September 7, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
8            displayed at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1230496105030393857>.
- 9       • September 8, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
10            displayed at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1242346693233979394>.
- 11       • September 9, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
12            displayed at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1244936574992777217>.
- 13       • September 10, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
14            displayed at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1261676767611359234>.
- 15       • September 11, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
16            displayed at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1275021219327287296>.
- 17       • September 16, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
18            displayed at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1224979299415068673>.
- 19       • September 17, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
20            displayed at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1228919405133926400>.
- 21       • September 18, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
22            displayed at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1315261038602981376>.
- 23       • September 19, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
24            displayed at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1239099980675043328>.
- 25       • September 20, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
26            displayed at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1239444904205594629>.
- 27       • September 21, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
28            displayed at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1259482814124351489>.

- September 22, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1359140560771112967>.
- September 23, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1267803477490753536>.
- September 24, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1384114559124865025>.
- September 25, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1280427602763829248>.
- September 26, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1346778759261782022>.
- September 27, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1288188106907291648>.
- September 28, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1291645663504216064>.
- September 29, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1302622811303927809>.
- September 30, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1308330389698740224>.
- October 1, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1359427158767259649>.
- October 2, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1309206358038806529>.
- October 3, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1316333226261131266>.
- October 4, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1365995375073591302>.
- October 5, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1318885370562531328>.

- 1       • October 6, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
2            at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1320666838825652225>.
- 3       • October 7, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
4            at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1371400721778810880>.
- 5       • October 8, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
6            at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1371431515851264002>.
- 7       • October 9, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
8            at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1372488206889975808>.
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- 17      • October 14, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
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- 25      • October 18, 2021, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
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- 27      • April 18, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at  
28           <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1479030242299817987>.

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- 3       • September 21, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
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- 25       • October 3, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at  
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- 27       • October 4, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed at  
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- 25      • October 17, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
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- 13       • October 25, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
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- 23       • October 30, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
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- 25       • November 1, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
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- 27       • November 2, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
28           at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1320666838825652225>.

- 1       • November 3, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
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- 5       • November 5, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
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- 7       • November 6, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
8            at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1358363035858071559>.
- 9       • November 7, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
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- 11       • November 8, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
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- 13       • November 9, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and displayed  
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- 17       • November 11, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
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- 19       • November 12, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
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- 13          • November 30, 2022, for the work reproduced, distributed and  
14          displayed at <https://twitter.com/foochia/status/1570023374881169415>.

15  
16          Notwithstanding the receipt of the take-down notices described herein, the 'foochia'  
17          account remains live and active. Each infringement remains live.

18          25. On information and belief, infringements that have been uploaded and  
19          saved on the Twitter server by one user can be and are displayed on other user's  
20          accounts at the direction of the other user. Twitter not only fails and refuses to take  
21          down repeat infringers who post and display unauthorized and infringing copies of  
22          Celebrity Photographs but also fails and refuses to apply its purported take-down  
23          policy to repeat infringers who save such infringements.

24          26. Backgrid's extensive but frustrated copyright enforcement efforts  
25          evidence the massive, repeated, and ongoing infringing activity permitted, facilitated,  
26          and encouraged on Twitter accounts. Notwithstanding the frequent written demands  
27          from Backgrid, Twitter's own Copyright Policy, and the legal prerequisites for  
28          DMCA safe harbor protection, Twitter has willfully failed and refused to terminate the

1 accounts. Stunningly, all of the accounts remain live and online today while Twitter  
 2 continues to profit from the blatant, repeated, and ongoing infringements of the  
 3 copyrighted works of others, including without limitation the timely registered  
 4 Celebrity Photographs collectively attached as Exhibit B, which are infringed by  
 5 Twitter.

6 **Twitter Does Not Expeditiously Remove Infringements as Required for Safe**  
 7 **Harbor Protection Under 17 U.S.C. 512(b)-(d)**

8 27. To enjoy safe harbor protection, a qualified Internet Service Provider  
 9 (“ISP”) must “upon notification of claimed infringement respond[] expeditiously to  
 10 remove, or disable access to, the material that is claimed to be infringing or to be the  
 11 subject of the infringing activity.” 17 U.S.C. §§ 512(b)(2)(E), 512(c)(1)(C),  
 12 512(d)(3).

13 28. Defendant’s users have reproduced, publicly displayed, and publicly  
 14 distributed, and continue to reproduce, publicly display and publicly distribute,  
 15 Celebrity Photographs by making them available for download, copy, and  
 16 reproduction, together with other photographs that Backgrid either owns or  
 17 exclusively licenses for distribution, reproduction, public display, and use in creating  
 18 derivative works.

19 29. Despite having received DMCA notices from Backgrid, Twitter has  
 20 not expeditiously taken down Backgrid’s Celebrity content. For example, Backgrid  
 21 sent over 6,700 DMCA notices, but Twitter has not expeditiously taken down content  
 22 in response to the same and cannot seek protection under the DMCA.

23 **FIRST CLAIM FOR RELIEF**  
 24 **(Direct, Contributory, and Vicarious Copyright**  
 25 **Infringement, 17 U.S.C. § 501)**

26 30. Backgrid incorporates by reference the allegations in paragraphs 1  
 27 through 29, above, as though set forth at length.

1       31. The Celebrity Photographs consist substantially of material that is wholly  
 2 original and contain copyrightable subject matter. Each of the Celebrity Photographs  
 3 was either lawfully registered by Backgrid or assigned to it, including all rights of  
 4 copyright thereto, by AKM-GSI. Accordingly, Backgrid now owns all rights of  
 5 copyright, title, and interest in the Celebrity Photographs and each of the Celebrity  
 6 Photographs contains protectable subject matter.

7       32. Each Celebrity Photograph was registered with the United States  
 8 Copyright Office within 90 days of publication and/or before it was infringed.  
 9 Accordingly, Backgrid is entitled to all legally cognizable relief for its infringement,  
 10 including without limitation temporary, preliminary, and permanent injunctive relief,  
 11 the recovery of actual damages and lost profits or statutory damages, and an award of  
 12 costs and attorneys' fees.

13       33. As of the filing of this Complaint, Twitter had infringed at least 1,526  
 14 Celebrity Photographs, as reflected in Exhibit B hereto and incorporated herein. The  
 15 infringed Celebrity Photographs identified in the attached exhibits are merely  
 16 illustrative; Defendant's acts of infringement are continuous and on-going and  
 17 additional infringements of Celebrity Photographs—both those that have already  
 18 occurred and those that occur pre-discovery—will doubtlessly be discovered.  
 19 Accordingly, Backgrid seeks, and is entitled to, its full legal remedies with respect to  
 20 each act of infringement proved whether or not specifically alleged herein.

21       34. Defendant has directly infringed and will continue to directly infringe the  
 22 Celebrity Photographs, including without limitation by continuing to publicly display  
 23 the photos long after being apprised of infringement, using Twitter's explore feature  
 24 to choose and arrange infringing content, promoting tweets based on subscription  
 25 models, such as the Blue Subscription, in which verified users pay a monthly fee to  
 26 have their tweets promoted on others' tweet-feeds, and continuing to store copies of  
 27 the photos on Defendant's servers without Backgrid's consent.

1       35. Defendant has contributorily infringed the Celebrity Photographs,  
2 including without limitation by encouraging its users to upload and edit photographs  
3 found on the Internet, failing to advise users that civil and criminal penalties attach to  
4 the unauthorized copying, posting, and public display of copyrighted photographs, and  
5 by creating a system and practice of removing metadata from each unlawfully posted  
6 and displayed Celebrity Photograph. Defendant has vicariously infringed the Celebrity  
7 Photographs. Without limitation Twitter has the right and ability to supervise the  
8 infringement because it has both a legal right to stop or limit the directly infringing  
9 conduct, as well as the practical ability to do so, as shown by its willingness and  
10 ability to take down infringement identified in DMCA notices sent by other parties.  
11 Moreover, Twitter had a direct financial interest in the infringement because it used  
12 the information it collects from tweets and user engagement to target advertisements  
13 to specific user audiences. It does so by displaying advertisements calculated to  
14 interest a given audience. It also displays other tweets in a feed tailored to a  
15 particulate user. On information and belief, the Celebrity Photographs were  
16 displayed in tweet-feeds, along with advertisements that targeted particular groups of  
17 Twitter users. To keep its users engaged while promoting the advertisements on which  
18 its revenue depends, Twitter also sends emails to its users with links to tweets that  
19 they might not otherwise see. Twitter thus provides links to tweets from accounts that  
20 are not “followed” by the targeted user. By doing so, Twitter increases the number of  
21 views those advertisements receive, thereby increasing its own advertising revenue.  
22

23       36. Defendant’s acts of direct, contributory, and vicarious infringement have  
24 been and are willful as demonstrated by, inter alia, their numerous claims that they  
25 never received take-down notices, their consistent failure to act on take-down notices  
26 expeditiously—or at all, their failure and refusal to bar repeat infringers from using  
27 their websites, and their failure and refusal to apply their own Copyright Policy to  
28 their users.

37. Defendant's acts alleged herein have been and are being performed without the permission, license, or consent of Backgrid.

38. As a result of Defendant's acts alleged herein, Backgrid has suffered substantial economic damage in an amount to be proved at trial.

39. Defendant has willfully infringed, and unless enjoined will continue to willfully infringe, Backgrid's copyrights by continuing to engage in the acts alleged herein.

40. Defendant's wrongful acts of have caused, and are continuing to cause, injury to Backgrid in an amount that cannot be accurately computed. Unless this Court temporarily, preliminarily, and permanently restrains defendants from the further commission of such acts, Backgrid will suffer irreparable injury for which it will not have an adequate remedy at law. Accordingly, Backgrid seeks a declaration that defendants are infringing Backgrid's copyrights and appropriate orders under 17 U.S.C. § 502 enjoining defendants from any further acts of infringement.

41. In light of the willful and egregious nature of their acts of copyright infringement, Backgrid is also entitled to an award of \$150,000 per photograph in statutory damages.

42. Backgrid is additionally entitled to an award of its costs and attorneys' fees from each defendant.

## **SECOND CLAIM FOR RELIEF**

## **(Declaratory Relief, No Safe Harbor Under the DMCA)**

43. Backgrid incorporates by reference the allegations in paragraphs 1 through 42, above, as though set forth at length.

44. Under 28 U.S.C. § 2201, an actual controversy exists over whether Twitter has satisfied the requirements of 17 U.S.C. 512(i) by adopting and reasonably implementing a Digital Millennium Copyright Act repeat infringer policy, and, therefore, whether Twitter is entitled to the safe harbor.

45. Section 512(i), provides that “[t]he limitations on liability established by this section shall apply to a service provider only if the service provider— (A) has adopted and reasonably implemented [] a policy that provides for the termination in appropriate circumstances of [] account holders [] who are repeat infringers; and accommodates and (B) does not interfere with standard technical measures.” As alleged herein, Twitter has not adopted and reasonably implemented a policy that provides for the termination of repeat infringers and interferes with standard technical measures.

46. Backgrid seeks a declaration that Twitter has neither adopted nor reasonably implemented a repeat infringer policy, and, as such, is liable for each of the works infringed on its platform and is not entitled to the safe harbor in any circumstances for any work until it complies with Section 512(i).

## PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Backgrid requests judgment against defendants as follows:

1. That defendants, their officers, agents, servants, employees, and representatives, and all persons in active concert or participation with them, be permanently enjoined from copying, reproducing, displaying, promoting, advertising, distributing, or selling, or engaging in any other form of dealing or transaction in, any and all photographs whose copyrights are owned by Backgrid;

2. That an accounting pursuant to 17 U.S.C. §§ 504 (a)(1) & (b) be made of all profits, income, receipts or other benefit derived by defendants from the unlawful reproduction, copying, display, promotion, distribution, or sale of products and services, or other media, either now known or hereafter devised, that improperly or unlawfully infringed upon Backgrid's copyrights;

3. For actual damages for copyright infringement pursuant to 17 U.S.C. §§ 504 (a)(1) & (b);

1       4. For statutory damages for copyright infringement, including willful  
2 infringement, in accordance with 17 U.S.C. §§ 504(a)(2) & (c), and for costs, interest  
3 and reasonable attorney's fees pursuant to 17 U.S.C. § 505;

4       5. For a declaration that Twitter is not entitled to the DMCA safe harbor for  
5 any work posted on its platform, and;

6       6. That Backgrid be awarded such other and further relief as the Court deem  
7 just and appropriate.

8  
9 Dated: March 13, 2023

**ONE LLP**

10 By: /s/ Joanna Ardalan

11           Joanna Ardalan

12           Peter R. Afrasiabi

13           David W. Quinto

14           Attorneys for Plaintiff,  
15           Backgrid USA, Inc.

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**DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL**

Plaintiff Backgrid USA, Inc., hereby demands trial by jury of all issues so triable under the law.

Dated: March 13, 2023

ONE LLP

By: /s/ Joanna Ardalan

Joanna Ardalan

David W. Quinto

Peter R. Afrasiabi

Attorneys for Plaintiff

Backgrid USA, Inc.